

NEWS

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Irvington Attorney, His Wife and Third Individual Arrested on Immigration Fraud Charges

(More)

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NEWARK – An Irvington lawyer, his wife and a third individual were arrested today on an eight-count federal Indictment charging them with conspiracy to defraud the United States and with immigration fraud, U.S. Attorney Christopher Christie announced.

The Indictment charges Jonathan Saint Preux, 44, an attorney specializing in immigration law at the law offices of Jonathan Saint Preux in Irvington; his wife, Michele Saint Preux, 40, who is the firm's office manager; and Naranjan Patel, 47, who recruited clients for the firm. They are accused of fraudulently assisting a large number of immigrant aliens to live illegally in New Jersey and elsewhere in the United States.

According to the Indictment, the defendants falsely represented that the aliens had lived unlawfully in the United States before 1982 so that such aliens could qualify for legal residency under an amnesty immigrant program sponsored by the federal government.

“Committing immigration fraud is a serious matter, much more so when carried out by an officer of the court,” said Kyle Hutchins, Special Agent in Charge of ICE's office of investigations in Newark. “As this indictment shows, these individuals conspired to circumvent our immigration laws, and that deception directly threatens our nation's security. Immigration and Customs Enforcement will be relentless in our efforts to detect, investigate and prosecute anyone who attempts to fraudulently obtain an immigration benefit.”

Jonathan Saint Preux was arrested this morning by ICE agents when his car was pulled over in Millburn. His wife and Patel were arrested at their respective homes.

All three had initial appearances today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Claire C. Cecchi, who set bail for Jonathan Saint Preux at \$250,000 to be secured by real estate; and \$150,000 for Preux's wife and Patel, with both of those bails also to be secured by real estate.

Jonathan and Michele Preux live in South Orange; Patel resides in South Plainfield.

The Indictment charges the defendants with, among other things, attempting to fraudulently cause the Department of Homeland Security's Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) to approve a large number of Applications for Status as a Temporary Resident (Forms I-687), and other immigration documents. An I-687 is a petition for an alien to become a lawful resident in the United States.

The defendants prepared at least 800 such petitions, a large number of which were fraudulent. According to the Indictment, the Jonathan Saint Preux law office received thousands of dollars from many of the aliens for the preparation and filing of the fraudulent I-687s.

The Indictment further charges that in preparation for aliens' interviews with CIS regarding the I-687s, the defendants conspired to instruct such aliens, including seven cooperating witnesses specifically discussed in the Indictment, to falsely claim to CIS that they had lived unlawfully in the United States before 1982.

In addition to the conspiracy count, which carries a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, each defendant is charged in various counts with submitting false immigration documents, which carries a maximum penalty of 10 year in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Despite indictment, all defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proved guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Christie credited Special Agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Kyle Hutchins in Newark, and Immigration officers with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, under the direction District Director Andrea Quarantillo in Newark.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Adam S. Lurie of the U.S. Attorney's Public Protection Unit in Newark.

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